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Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest Open Through September 9

Little Rock, Ark. – School entries are being accepted for the fourth annual Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest sponsored by the Arkansas Agriculture Department (AAD) and Farm Credit. Entry forms are available at <http://www.aad.arkansas.gov/arkansas-school-garden-of-the-year-contest>. A new category has been added to the contest this year for schools interested in starting a school garden. Applicants may be any Arkansas school, grades pre-K through 12, that had a school garden open during the 2016-2017 school year, or any schools planning to start a garden in the 2017-2018 school year.

Entries will be judged by a committee amid categories below. All school applicants except those applying for the school garden start up category will be required to provide photos or video documentation of garden activities and progress. The deadline for submissions is September 9, 2017.

Farm Credit is generously providing funding for winners in the following award categories:

- Best School Garden Start-Up Proposal - \$500
- Best Nutrition Education Based Garden - \$500
- Best Community Collaboration Garden - \$500
- Best Environmental Education Focused Garden - \$500
- Overall Winning Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year - \$1,000

“School gardens are important hands-on educational tools that incorporate math and science skills while teaching students about food production, good nutrition, and the importance of agriculture, our state’s largest industry,” says Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward. I’m pleased we could add a new award category this year to provide schools interested in starting a school garden to compete for the cash awards generously provided by Farm Credit.

“As a farmer-owned cooperative, we are excited to continue our support of teachers and projects that engage Arkansas students in food production and agricultural sustainability. Through these partnerships, we can ensure that the valuable role of Arkansas agriculture remains top-of-mind for the next generation,” said Farm Credit of Western Arkansas President & CEO, Glen Manchester, on behalf of the Farm Credit cooperatives of Arkansas.

The Arkansas Grown program promotes food and products grown in Arkansas by Arkansas producers, and helps make the connection between growers and buyers. Arkansas Grown is a program of the

Arkansas Agriculture Department. Find producers, farmer's markets, and other local fresh food resources at www.arkansasgrown.org.

With approximately \$3.2 billion in assets, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, Delta Agricultural Credit Association, Farm Credit Midsouth, Farm Credit of Western Arkansas support rural communities and agriculture across Arkansas with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow. The four Farm Credit associations in Arkansas are owned by the more than 10,800 customers. Through the cooperative structure, customer-owners have a voice and vote in the associations' governance and share in their cooperatives' financial success through cooperative returns, which total more than \$184 million since 1997.

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The Arkansas Agriculture Department offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.